

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 COPENH 00490 231757Z  
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07  
NSAE-00 PA-02 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-02 PM-05 NSC-05  
SS-15 HA-05 /082 W  
-----109506 240226Z /62

R 231710Z JAN 78  
FM AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5781  
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL HONG KONG  
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI  
AMEMBASSY OSLO  
USLO PEKING  
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK  
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM  
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

UNCLAS COPENHAGEN 0490

EO 11652: NA  
TAGS: SHUM CB DA  
SUBJ: DANISH AMBASSADOR REPORTS ON CAMBODIA

SUMMARY: DANISH AMBASSADOR TO CAMBODIA, AFTER TWO WEEK VISIT,  
CALLED PHNOM PENH A "GHOST TOWN". FINNNISH AMBASSADOR CALLED IT  
A "NIGHTMARE" WHILE ONE SWEDE PERSISTED IN PRAISING CAMBODIAN  
CONDITIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. MEDIA OVER THE WEEKEND CARRIED REPORTS ON DANISH AMBASSADOR  
TO CAMBODIA'S RECENT VISIT TO THAT COUNTRY. AMBASSADOR KJELD  
MORTENSEN, WHO IS RESIDENT IN PEKING, VISITED CAMBODIA WITH THE  
AMBASSADORS OF SWEDEN AND FINLAND AND "COLLEAGUES" FROM TANZANIA  
AND IRAQ. THEY WERE IN PHNOM PENH FOR TWO WEEKS. ACCORDING TO  
THE RITZAU'S PEKING CORRESPONDENT, ERKKI KARJALAINEN,  
MORTENSEN SAID THAT THE DIPLOMATS WERE ABLE TO LEAVE THE  
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CAPITAL ONLY ONCE, ON A VISIT TO ANGKOR-WATT.

2. MORTENSEN REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THE VISITORS WERE TOLD THE  
FORMER THREE-MILLION-PERSON CITY OF PHNOM PENH WAS NOW INHABITED  
BY 20,000; IN FACT, THE NORDIC DIPLOMATS FELT THE NUMBER WAS EVEN  
LOWER. ONE CALLED PHNOM PENH A "GHOST TOWN". OF THE NORMAL CITY  
ACTIVITIES LITTLE WAS LEFT AND THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO TRAFFIC.

ONLY THE MAIN HIGHWAYS WERE OPEN; THE SIDE STREETS AND SIDEWALKS HAD BEEN CONVERTED TO VEGETABLE GARDENS, MORTENSEN SAID, THUS MAKING THE CITY TO A GREAT EXTENT SELF-SUFFICIENT IN FOOD. ACCORDING TO RITZAU, MORTENSEN CLAIMED THAT NEVER BEFORE HAD A COUNTRY EXISTED WHICH PLACED SUCH GREAT IMPORTANCE ON THE VILLAGES TO THE NEGLECT OF THE CITIES.

4. MORTENSEN SAID MONEY HAS BEEN ABOLISHED AND ALL TRADE GOES ON BY BARTER. PIGS AS WELL AS RABBITS AND HENS ARE RAISED IN THE CITY. EACH MORNING GRIGADES OF YOUNT WORKERS, AGES 10 TO 30, ARE BROUGHT IN APPARENTLY TO REBUILD THE CITY'S INDUSTRY. THEY ARE RETURNED TO THE COUNTRY IN THE EVENING. MORTENSEN REPORTED THAT LITERALLY SPEAKING HE SAW NO OLDER PEOPLE AND THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN MILITARY AND CIVILIANS SINCE NO UNITS WERE IN UNIFORM. NOR DID HE SEE MANY ARMED PEOPLE. THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE OF ANY CONFLICT WITH VIETNAM.

5. THERE IS NO MAIL AND NO TELEGRAPH AND SINCE MONEY HAS BEEN DONE AWAY WITH, OLD BILLS WERE OFTEN SEEN LYING ON THE STREETS OF PHNOM PENH. THE ONLY CONTACT WITH THE SURROUNDING WORLD, THE AMBASSADOR SAID, WAS A PLANE TO CHINA TWICE A MONTH. THE RAILWAY STATIONS WERE EMPTY AND NO TRAINS WERE MOVING. PRIVATE CARS HAD BEEN DESTROYED BY RUST AND ONLY THE TOP LEADERS WERE PERMITTED TO USE AUTOMOBILES NOW. THE AMBASSADOR SAID THEY WERE TOLD THEY WOULD NOT BE PERMITTED TO USE CARS, BUT HE DID NOT EXPLAIN HOW THEY GOT AROUND THEMSELVES.

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6. ACCORDING TO ONE REPORT, FINNISH AMBASSADOR PENTI SUOMELA SAID UPON HIS RETURN TO PEKING THAT "IT IS LIKE AN ABSURD FIL, A NIGHTMARE. ONE FINDS IT HARD TO BELIEVE IT'S REALLY TRUE".  
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## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014